

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A retractable needle assembly for use in medical procedures, comprising:

5 a needle assembly, said needle assembly comprising a hub having an anterior end and a posterior end, a hollow needle attached to the posterior end of the hub;

a tubular sheath having a longitudinal slot along a portion of its length, an anterior end, and a posterior end, said posterior end having an opening therethrough,

10 wherein the needle assembly is positioned within the tubular sheath with the hollow needle projecting from the posterior end of the hub through the posterior end of said sheath;

a cap attached to the anterior end of said sheath, said cap being open at its anterior end to allow access to the interior of said sheath;

15 a post, attached to said hub and projecting through said longitudinal slot;

a cross piece attached to the top of said post for moving the needle assembly along said longitudinal slot;

20 wherein said needle assembly may be moved reversibly along said longitudinal slot of said sheath between an exposed position in which the hollow needle passes through the opening in the posterior end of the sheath and a retracted position in which the hollow needle is contained within the tubular sheath,

wherein the opening in the posterior end of the sheath is large

enough to allow the hollow needle to pass therethrough, but too small to allow the hub to pass therethrough;

a means for reversibly locking the needle assembly in its exposed position;

5 a means for reversibly locking the needle assembly in its retracted position;

means for permanently locking the needle assembly in its retracted position, said permanent locking means comprising an aperture in said cap and a pin extending radially from said post which is received into said aperture .

2. The retractable needle assembly according to claim 1 wherein said pin includes a tapered surface forming a ramp, which engages said cap and “squeezes” said pin when said post is being inserted into said cap.

3. The retractable needle assembly according to claim 1 wherein said cap includes at least one lateral wall which partly defines a space which includes said aperture.

4. The retractable assembly according to claim 1 wherein said cap includes one lateral wall and a partial one of another lateral wall.